

current Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Leah Rabin, widow of Yitzhak Rabin; President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and King Abdullah II of Jordan.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters in Oslo

November 2, 1999

Middle East Peace Process

The President. I think I can speak for all of us when I say, first, we're very grateful to the Government of Norway for inviting us here for this important ceremony. And we now have to give some real energy to the framework talks, but I think even though the issues are difficult, the will is strong, and we're off to a good start.

Q. How do you see the strong focus, Mr. President, on the issue of the settlement?

The President. I think that the less we say now to the public and the more we work in private, the better off we'll be and the more likely we will be able to get an agreement.

Q. —a summit in January or February in Washington, or maybe in Camp David?

The President. I wouldn't—I don't think we should rule it out or in. We ought to make sure—see how much progress we can make between now and then. You know, I would do anything I could to help them.

Q. What is the main issue you will discuss right now when you start negotiations?

The President. I think we just have to talk about—to get agreement on the ground rules, how we're going to proceed.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:45 p.m. in the U.S. Ambassador's residence. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement on House Action on the Proposed "African Growth and Opportunity Act"

November 2, 1999

Today's vote is an important milestone in our effort to build a new economic relationship with sub-Saharan Africa and deepen ties with our Caribbean and Central American neighbors. This legislation will help increase trade, enhance opportunity, and boost economic growth in America and nations in Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America. I urge the Senate to pass this bill as soon as possible.

Statement on the Cyclone in India

November 2, 1999

On behalf of all Americans, Hillary and I offer our deepest condolences to the families who lost loved ones to the devastating cyclone that struck eastern India Friday and Saturday. It is gradually becoming clear just how much destruction was wrought along the seacoast and inland in those terrifying hours. There are reports that thousands of lives were lost and hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed. It is truly a national calamity.

Our hearts go out to the Indian people, and we are prepared to do what we can to help. The Government of India has an immense task ahead in providing assistance to the people who were affected by this tragedy. The United States Government is providing more than \$2 million worth of food and \$100,000 worth of tents and plastic sheeting to help alleviate the hunger and immediate suffering. I also encourage the American people to help through charities involved in international relief.